The South Is Different

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF

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Mr. WILLIAMS of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks in the Appendix, I am including the following article, entitled "The South Is Different," taken from the March 8, 1958, issue of National Review and written by Anthony Harrigan:

THE SOUTH IS DIFFERENT

(By Anthony Harrigan)

The South is different. That is why it is so fascinating to people who live in other regions of America.

Visitors to the South are, depending on their point of view, amazed, amused, entranced or enraged by the South's differences. But for every author of a condemnatory article, the South has a thousand friends who are just crazy about Dixie.

Every spring, when the first wisteria begins to spill over old brick walls, the South's friends cross the Potomac. They come to view the South's camellias and azaleas, walk through the southern pineywoods, ride on flatboats through the South's swamps, tour southern shrines and historic houses, drive along moss-hung southern roads, peep into southern gardens, eat southern hominy and

grits, shrimp and shad and oysters, rice and gravy, crabs and baked breads. These friends enjoy and admire southern houses, highways, flowers, smiles, and victuals. If they dislike southern politics, they clearly do not deem politics the most important thing in life.

Yes; they are all crazy about the South—the rich New Yorkers, the honeymooners from Illinois and the elderly couples from Massachusetts. There is no evidence that they believe the literary and political legend of the South as a land of morons, lynchers, rapists, nightriders and servant whippers.

Southerners know that people read in the news magazines and the paperback books that they are psychologically stunted and spiritually impoverished. But they don't get too excited. They know that millions of northern tourists see the falsity of the myth and the scare articles when they travel south in the springtime.

The rich, differentiating vitality of the South cannot be enclosed in a single definition. Therein lies much of the trouble the South has in getting itself across to the rest of the Nation. It is also why the best way to counter the effect of the headlines is to invite a northern friend to visit, go to church with the family, drink whisky on the piazza, talk to the Negroes who drive the tractors across the big fields, and fish in the surf off the magnificent beaches along the Atlantic and gulf coasts. That is the best of all possible ways to make a northerner understand that the South isn't a chapter from a novel by Erskine Caldwell.

ESSENTIAL CONSERVATISM

The South today is as much a land of Cadillacs, waterskiers, air-conditioning and split-level houses as it is a land of cotton and tobacco, sawmills, bourbon and drawling voices. But the South is still very different, and the gap isn't closing between the sections. It has, to be sure, changed in the last 20 years. For that matter, the South of 1938 was very different from the South of 1918. There's always been change, and more rapid change than you think. Yet the essential southernness has remained.

The South has a sort of built-in power brake, which is a most effective piece of historical equipment. It has an essential conservatism, which has kept it from skidding into some very unhappy patterns, enthusiasms and crazes. The prosperity-worship of the 1920's that made many sections of the country abandon old standards of decent behavior came too late for most of the South. By the time many southerners realized that a brave new world was aborning, the crash came and destroyed the modernist, materialist shibboleths. And when the depression set in and gave the country a severe shock, the South didn't find the shock so terrific. After all, poverty had been a continuing condition south of the Mason-Dixon line for decades. Many northern youths were so shocked that they turned to radical political movements; Southerners of the rising generation had had the experience of troubled times that enabled them to understand events and take them in stride. And so it was that the South, unlike the North, produced no crop of radicals in those bitter years.

Josephine Pinckney, the southern novelist, wrote about the generation of Southerners that matured in the late 1920's and early 1930's. Her words still apply:

"They share with the rest of American youth the advantages of the new education, freedom of movement, and frankness of speech, and it is certain that a fairly large number has managed to preserve a good taste, a feeling for courtesy that checks extravagance along these lines. The thoughtful ones see which way they are headed and are prepared to stem the flood."

Since World War II, the South has gained new economic security. But it has done so without notable sacrifice of its traditions of independence and humane living, personalness and nonconformism. Factories have been mechanized but not the people.

Of course, the tempo of Southern life has speeded up in the 1940's and 1950's. Southerners who have matured in the last 15 years have behind them the same national experiences of war and boom that Americans in other regions also share. But the North has changed too. If the South has become a little less personal, the North has become vastly more impersonal. If the South now includes suburia, the North includes a rapidly-expanding subtopia.

Note, for example, that for the first time in decades the North is not a land of promise to the able, educated young southerner. The southerners who are heading North are the Negroes from abandoned cotton lands and the hillbillies from remote backcountry areas. The South today is losing its worst citizens to the North, not its best.

The Southern experience, in short, has to be related to the experience of life in the North. Southern cities are not enjoying fantastic growth. But Northern cities, as they grow, are filling up with migrants who bring major social headaches and economic costs, and the solvent middle class is fleeing the northern cities for the suburbs and beyond.

So it is that southerners today are trying to persuade northern friends to move South—and the South is, indeed, gaining many first-class citizens from the North, along with a lot of first-class industry. If the South has its quota of racial troubles, the North has more than its quota of labor troubles. If northern editors were as frank as Horace Greeley was in the 19th century, they might say editorially: "Go South, young man."

STATES OF MIND

The South, as every traveler knows, is not one place, one monolithic society. There are many Souths.

There are as many other Souths as there are Southern States. And there are Souths that cross State lines, regions that unite coastal belts and piedmont areas. Indeed the South is more than a place or places; it is a state of mind, many states of mind.

Today, however, there is a new South—the hardcore South solidified in the last 4 years as the result of political pressures. If economic changes were splintering the South in the 1940's and early 1950's, the May 17, 1954, decision of the United States Supreme Court welded the South into new unity.

Resentment at the application of judicial, legislative, and journalistic pressure has caused a hardening of southern opinion in the last 4 years. There has been a truly astonishing revival of pamphleteering. There has been close cooperation between State governors and attorneys general. There have been frequent meetings of southwide resistance groups. Talk at the dinner table in country clubs, at cocktail parties, in barbershops is today talk of what is happening in Montgomery, Nashville, Little Rock, Charleston, and Tallahassee. There is psychological unity, if not political unity. For widespread awareness of being under pressure to change a way of life has forged new ties between very different parts of the South.

It is difficult to realize that there is a new pattern of southern thinking. One asks oneself: What way of life has the tobacco grower in Southside, Va., in common with a missile worker at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala.? How does the shrimp boat captain on the Carolina coast feel related to the cotton farmer in the Mississippi Delta?

Actually, their common experience is an experience of being attacked, pushed around, scorned, ridiculed—in the newsreels, the television "studies" of southern race situations, the newspapers, and magazines. Southerners in many walks of life and many different locales realize that they are painted as devils and considered a collective blot on the life of the Nation. They know what they and their families and friends are like, and they don't accept the press and television portraits as factual. They are profoundly resentful at the characterization of themselves in the pages of such publications as Time and Life.

Southerners aren't eager to be sundered from the life of the Nation. They don't have a chip on their shoulders, waiting for a northerner to push it off. On the contrary, they are well aware that there are millions of Americans who share their attitudes and a common heritage. But press lords have insisted on characterizing southerners as brutes and bigots, and have thereby increased regional consciousness.

The pressure applied against the South is not causing the South to surrender its culture and approach to life. Because the southerner of today wants new factories on the bayous and in the magnolia groves, enjoys air conditioning in his office, flies to New York once a week on business and enjoys a martini as well as any Manhattanite, one must not conclude that he is prepared to surrender his traditions and his way of life.

With the coming of economic progress, southerners have done a lot of soul searching and self-examination. The pressure campaigns of the last 4 years have resulted in even more thoughtful study. Looking back at their land and its traditions, southerners have come to realize that the mind of the South took its shape in an age of realism in men and affairs, back in the 18th century. The original shapers of the southern tradition believed that progress resulted not from equality of condition, but from fruitful inequalities.

THE NORTH: TALK VERSUS ACTIONS

The South has always been frank about its position on the question of equality. And, in the North, many persons over many generations have shared the view of southern thinkers. But for generations northerners who hold profoundly conservative views of society have cloaked their views.

Educated southerners have long recognized the discrepancies between the North's public statements and its private principles. The bitter experience of Reconstruction and the lasting economic occupation of the South, which extends down to our present day, combined to teach several generations of southerners that the North's high-flown talk and its real actions are worlds apart.

The educated southerner knows, to be sure, that money power is not employed against him so blatantly these days. Domination of the South, the cutting back of its political influence in the Nation, is achieved nowadays by means more appropriate to the sophisticated mid-20th century. Southerners see applied to themselves the hidden persuaders of politics and mass movements. They recognize that attempts are being made not simply to sell integration to them but to sell them fear of losing new industry. But great social changes affecting a region with strong traditions cannot be achieved by the manipulative techniques of advertising. Elements in the North are trying hard to achieve great social changes in this way, of course. But those elements that have sought to merchandize candidates and policies like a breakfast cereal are meeting great resistance and disbelief.

Educated southerners profoundly resent the application of human engineering and engineering of consent techniques to their way of life. They consider it the least candid and honest development in the long history of American political life. They are among the least "other-directed" citizens in this Republic, to employ the modern term that

describes Americans whose character and behavior are shaped by the pressures applied to them. There is simply too much of the hard substance of the South's experience working on the lives of southerners. Change has come slowly. It has not been a shattering experience. There are no large groups of persons whose parents or grandparents knew fear and oppression in the slums and peasant villages of Europe. Rather, historic memories of southerners are of freedom under southern skies, of battling for what one believes is right, and of resisting outsiders and outside influence.

There are literally millions of conservatives in the South, millions of opponents of rapid change. Even today in the midst of rush for industry, many citizens in all walks of life are saying, "Go slow." Southerners don't want to be swept away by too rapid industrialization or by any sort of economic or social change that is too swift. There are plenty of people around to drag their feet or hold their shoulders against the door. There are 300 years of history behind the South, history with a special bent. It is highly unlikely that this will be written off overnight. And southerners ask: Why should the South be recast in the image of New York?

Southerners are not given to ideologies or to theorizing. But they know they want to remain somewhat different. They know they want for themselves and their posterity things that the North doesn't offer, that the radicals in the North would squeeze out of southern life if their influence became predominant. Southerners want leisure—time off to go hunting in the fall and fishing when the bass are biting; more important things, like a sense of belonging to a place where one's father and his father before him lived and died and where status is not the result of a bankroll or living in the right development.

Educated southerners know that these are the conditions for the slow maturing of a good life and the perfection of individual ways—of civilization, in short. Southerners may regret that their region doesn't have better symphony orchestras and more adequate art museums. But they know that these are secondary considerations. People in flourishing Northern cities, where there is no real community closeness and few shared ideals, have the apparatus of culture. But southerners also know that culture, as one Englishman recently expressed it, may be "a cosmopolitan system of fashions not altogether different from the conspiracy which dictates the way women will dress all over the world from its cells in Paris and New York." Such a culture may admire art but be utterly contemptuous of the slow movement of life that makes civilization possible.

WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Some writers and historians, including some in the South, say that the wave of history is against the South. They say that determinism shows that the southern pattern of life is destined to break up. They say the South has 5, 10, perhaps 15 years at the most, at the end of which it will be exactly like every other part of the United States. They imply that the South, when that day comes, will be bland, homogenized, with all but the officially approved prejudices removed, eating what the food institutes say to eat, making love the way the sex institutes and marital counselors say is best, jumping when the doctors say jump, buying candidates sold by the word manipulators on Madison Avenue, organized by big labor and dependent for jobs on big business.

This writer and millions of southerners disagree with this forecast. The southern view is that men and women and Providence, not impersonal economic forces and world political movements—make history. Brave men, determined men, men who remember what their fathers lived and died for, make history. No one is compelled to follow the advice of political and cultural hucksters. And by no means does history demonstrate that economics is the decisive force in society (only the Marxist believes that as an article of faith). Ideas of true community, of family love and loyalty, of individuality within a tradition—all continue and have meaning where men persist in them. And supposing the South's traditions do not survive the assault of other ideas? Is the possibility of that sufficient cause for southerners to goosestep with the rest of the Nation, accept conformity and uniformity, reject the nonconformism which is independence? Of course not, for as Calhoun, the greatest of southern thinkers, said long ago, the victory is in the struggle.

In other times other people have lost fights that they believed to be right, succumbed to what they considered barbarism. But the threat of defeat did not deter them from doing what they believed to be right and necessary.

Some southerners, of course, will not struggle for their conception of the good life. Others, make no mistake about it, will. There will be plenty of brands saved from the burning. After all, what is the goal of the American Republic? Not, certainly, that citizens should march in unison like so many robots or like sheep behind a leader or, again, like soldiers in a platoon, silent and obedient to orders. The traditions of the Republic and human experience itself point to the importance of variety in speech, character, thought, hopes, and aspirations. And so no southerner need be deterred from his course when he hears talk of a wave of the future. That wave exists only in imagination.